

M+B

LA WEEKLY

5 Free Art Shows to See in L.A. This Week

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Josh Mannis' *Non Serviam*, 2016

Wonderland of lost white kids

The figures depicted in Josh Mannis' current show at M+B, "Knowledge of the Future Estate," have delicate noses, pink cheeks and perfectly combed, flapper-era hair (except for the two young-looking Buddhists, who have no hair at all). A series of mid-sized black-and-white drawings could easily be illustrations for a storybook about privileged young city dwellers about to go completely off the rails. In one drawing, a wide-eyed girl and boy on the floor look as unmoored as Alice after she's fallen down the rabbit hole; another girl has just unplugged their Nintendo set. In another drawing, a boy with an orifice in his head runs naked past two tech workers in suits, almost touching fingers with one suited man, who looks away as though eye contact might hurt. The paintings, much brighter and more ornate, also depict well-coiffed people existing amid a chaos they're still coming to terms with.

Terrible day, terrible life

Dogs made of leather watch over Sam Pulitzer and Peter Wächtler show at House of Gaga, aka Reena Spaulings Fine Art Los Angeles. The dogs have floppy ears and long noses, and they flank the gallery entrance and perch on the stairs up to a side fire exit. The show they guard is not quite cohesive. Wächtler's paintings of volcanoes hang on the walls, while his glass sculptures of red and blue starfish sit on pedestals. Pulitzer's illustrative, wry drawings hang under plexiglass on stand-alone gridded metal fences. One drawing depicts a dog in the downward dog yoga pose and another shows a black dial, with text above and below it that reads: "When a terrible day turns into a terrible life." Though cute and comedic, this show is not optimistic.

Rolling on the floor

The first, largest room of Keith Rocka Knittel's show at Charlie James Gallery, "More Los Angeles Poems," consists of big, black-and-white drawings of cartoon men laughing hysterically, holding their stomachs and rolling on the ground. These drawings have captions: "Erasing Digital History Actually" reads one, while another says, "Actually I'm More of an Ideas Man." The newish pretensions of pseudo-creative digital culture certainly can be drop-dead funny. A subsequent room features more intimate drawings: a squished Modelo box on the sidewalk, Frosted Flakes and juice in a messy refrigerator.

Burning bodies and beautiful bottles

Candice Lin's exhibition at Commonwealth & Council looks, at first glance, minimal and under control. Four tasteful worktables with black legs sit in the main gallery, with objects carefully arranged on each. Up close, however, the tables become more complicated and charged. The glass on each surface has been delicately painted with scenes that can be apocalyptic. The surface of the "Putrefaction" table depicts a green scene, on which a fragile-looking taxidermied iguana sits. In "Petrification," bones lie on rough terrain and hooded figures light creatures on fire, as blue-tailed reptiles slink around. This scene recalls witch trials and superstitions, factors that have, historically, turned already vulnerable communities against themselves. Bacteria and fungi grow beneath a bell jar sitting on the table and little elegant bottles contain tinctures, including abortifacients, evidence of oft-vilified old knowledge. This table in particular is like the workspace of an eccentric herbalist. The installation feels as if it's against progress, or at least against the easy acceptance of modern, streamlined societies as better. Instead it honors the scars and skills of generations long past.

Get out of the picture

The current installation at Materials & Applications looks, from above, like a thick pink skin that's been laid over the office's front yard. In fact, it's a maze inspired by ambitious, sometimes silly 19th-century landscape architecture; its title, "The Kid Gets Out of the Picture," was inspired by actor/studio executive Robert Evans' autobiography, *The Kid Stays in the Picture*. Anyone can enter at their own risk, crawl under to see cinder-block pyramids or crawl over, but there's a warning sign out front saying M&A is not responsible for your safety as you embark on your own sculptural adventure. The Los Angeles Design Group worked on the installation with local design firms First Office, Laurel Broughton/Andrew Kovacs and Hirsuta.